

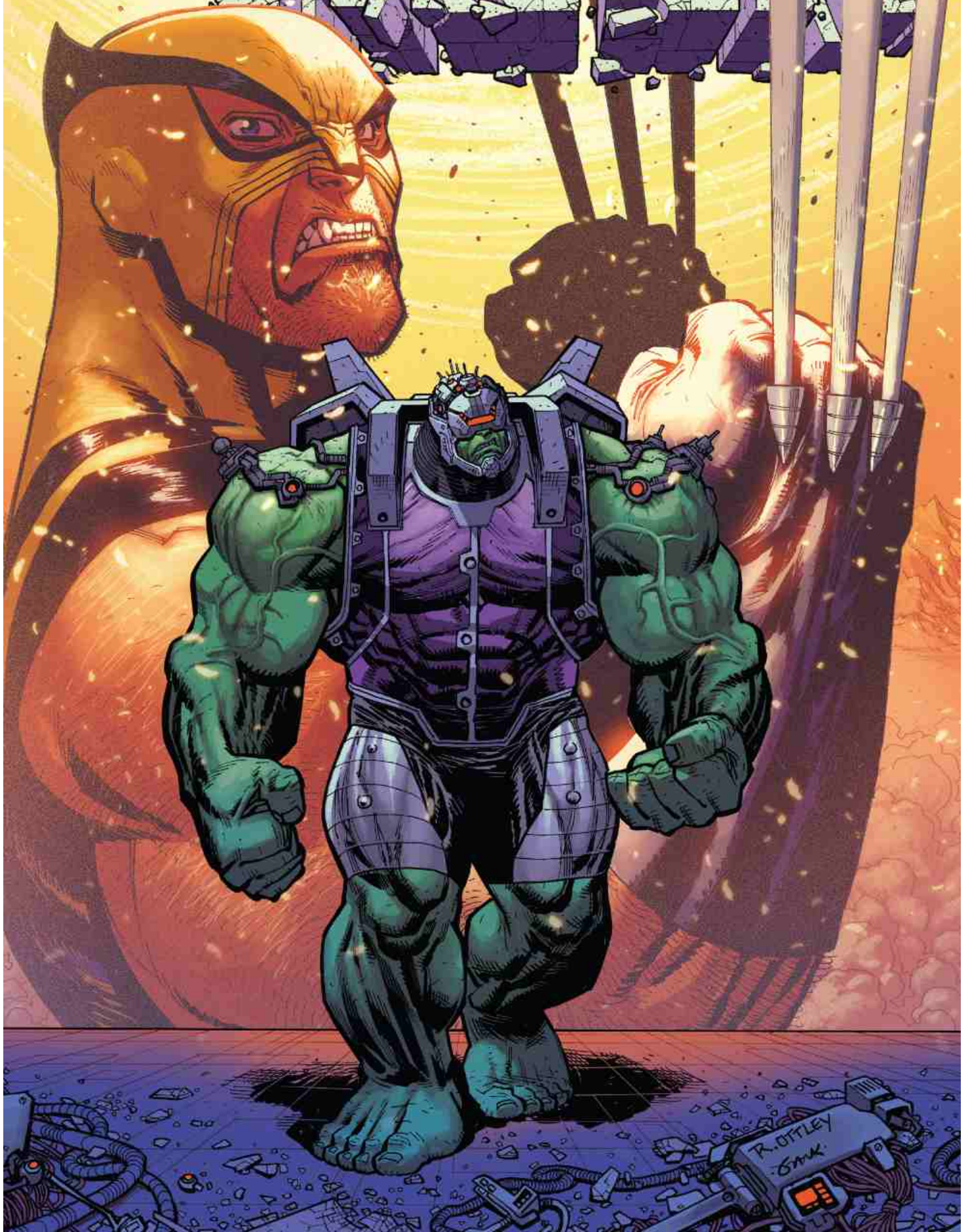
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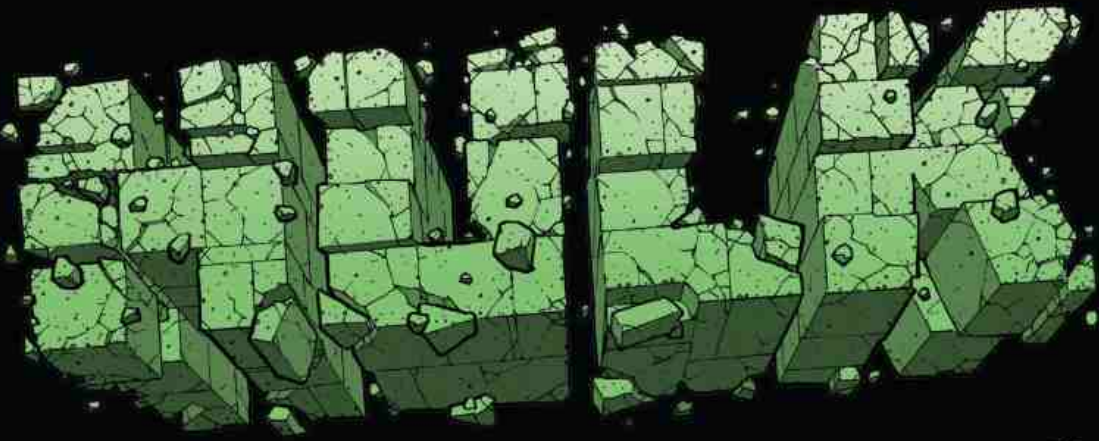
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LGY#770

DONNY CATES • RYAN OTTLEY • FRANK MARTIN

WOLVERINE





BRUCE BANNER HAS SOMEHOW MANAGED TO SPLIT THE HULK INTO THREE DISTINCT PARTS: THE HULK'S BODY HAS BEEN TURNED INTO A STARSHIP. BANNER'S PSYCHE PILOTS IT FROM WITHIN THE HULK'S MIND. AND THE HULK'S PSYCHE FUELS THE STARSHIP WITH HIS ANGER, WHICH BANNER HARNESSSES BY LOCKING THE HULK IN THE "ENGINE ROOM" AND SENDING ESCALATING LEVELS OF OPPONENTS FOR HIM TO FIGHT.

WITH THE WORLD BLAMING THE HULK FOR A MYSTERIOUS, DEADLY INCIDENT IN EL PASO, BANNER PILOTS THE STARSHIP HULK THROUGH A PORTAL TO AN UNSTABLE POCKET DIMENSION.

BUT DURING HIS JOURNEY THROUGH THE DIMENSIONAL BETWEEN-SPACE, HULK IS PULLED AGAINST HIS WILL INTO A DIFFERENT DIMENSION AND DISCOVERS THAT HIS CAPTOR IS AN ALTERNATE REALITY BRUCE BANNER...

"SMASHTRONAUT!" *part three*

by

DONNY CATES *and* **RYAN OTTLEY**

CLIFF RATHBURN *inker*
FRANK MARTIN *with* **FEDERICO BLEE** *color artists*
VC's CORY PETIT *letterer*
RYAN OTTLEY *and* **FRANK MARTIN** *cover artists*

DAVID NAKAYAMA; JIM CHEUNG; TRADD MOORE
and **HEATHER MOORE** *variant cover artists*

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HULK created by **STAN LEE** and **JACK KIRBY**

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EL PASO. THEN.



...BUT I...

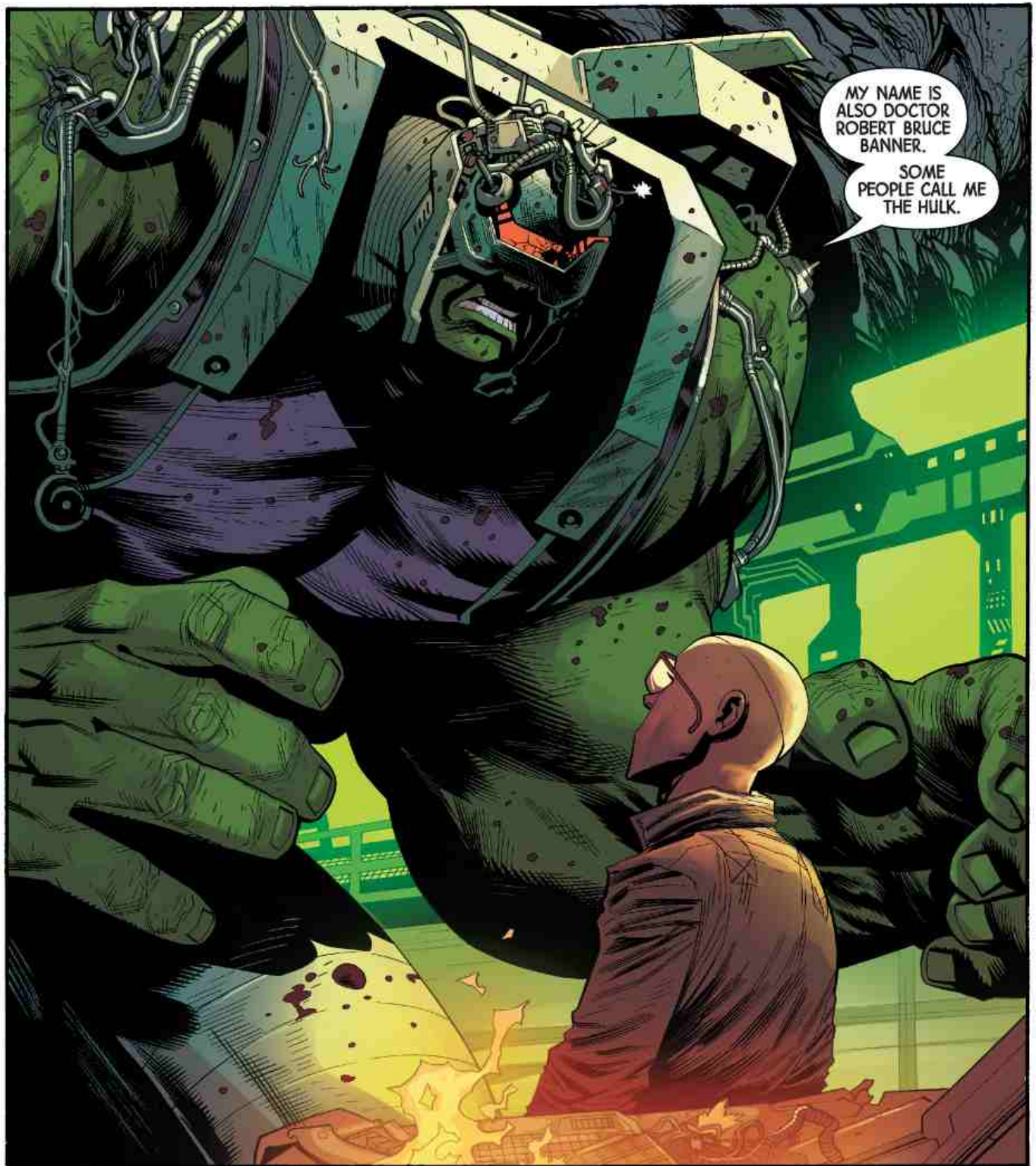
...I NEVER
FORGET.











MY NAME IS
ALSO DOCTOR
ROBERT BRUCE
BANNER.

SOME
PEOPLE CALL ME
THE HULK.



PERHAPS
WE SHOULD
TRADE NOTES.

YES...

YES,
PERHAPS WE
SHOULD...



OKAY, YOU
FIRST. WHAT
IS THIS PLACE
AND--

**ALERT! ENGINES
IN DANGER OF
OVERHEATING.**

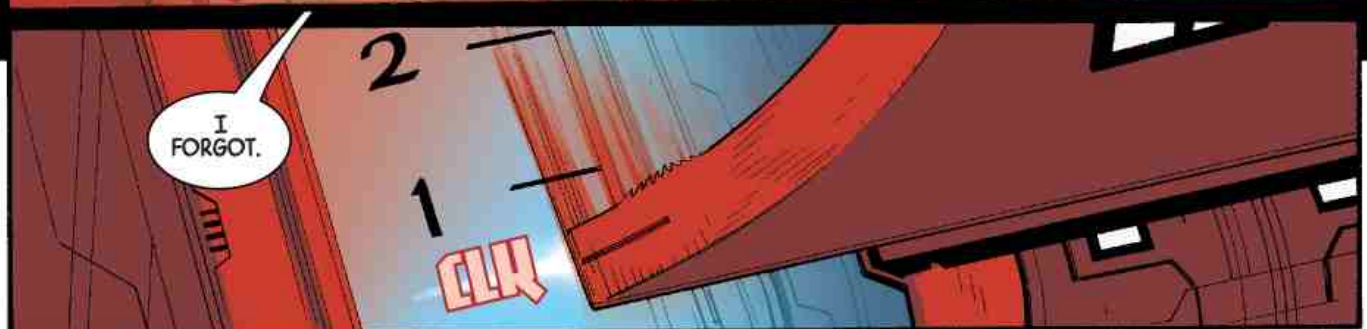
**IMMINENT FURNACE
COLLAPSE IS
ESTIMATED IN--**



OH.
RIGHT.



RAGGGH!!!



I
FORGOT.

CLIX







SO, YES. TO MAKE A VERY LONG STORY SHORT...I WAS EXPOSED TO THE GAMMA RADIATION FROM THE TEST SITE THAT DAY. AND I, WELL, I TURNED INTO *THIS*. ON MY WORLD, THEY CALL ME THE HULK.

IT'S...A BIT MORE COMPLICATED THAN THAT, BUT--



SIR, THERE APPEARS TO BE SOME UNUSUAL ACTIVITY AND ENERGY READINGS FROM THE ENGINE ROOM. THE RADIATION SIGNATURES DOUBLED AND THEN SUDDENLY--

I'M SURE IT'S NOTHING. PLEASE, I'M IN THE--



--MIDDLE OF A CONVERSATION.

I'M SORRY?

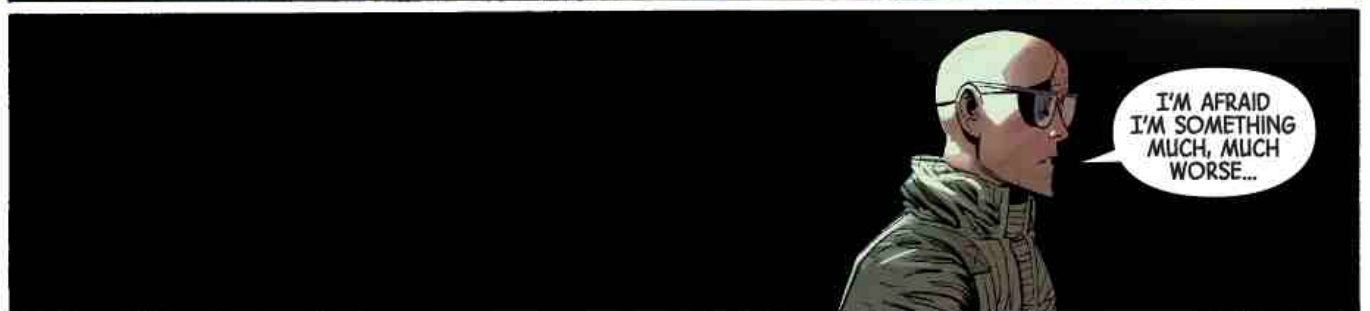
MY APOLOGIES. I'M SPEAKING TO MY SHIP'S COMPUTER.

PLEASE, I HAVE SO MANY QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR WORLD. HOW DID YOU FIND ME OUT THERE IN THAT... SUB-DIMENSIONAL RIFT? WHY WERE YOU SEARCHING FOR ME?

PERHAPS... TO FIND A CURE FOR YOUR OWN GAMMA MUTATION?



I...
I AM NOT ONE OF YOU... HULKS.



I'M AFRAID I'M SOMETHING MUCH, MUCH WORSE...

"YOU SEE..."

"...HERE ON
MY WORLD..."

"...THE EXPERIMENT...
THE G-BOMB..."

"IT WAS A
SUCCESS."

"I DREAMT
THAT DAY..."

"I DREAMT
OF A GREEN
WORLD."

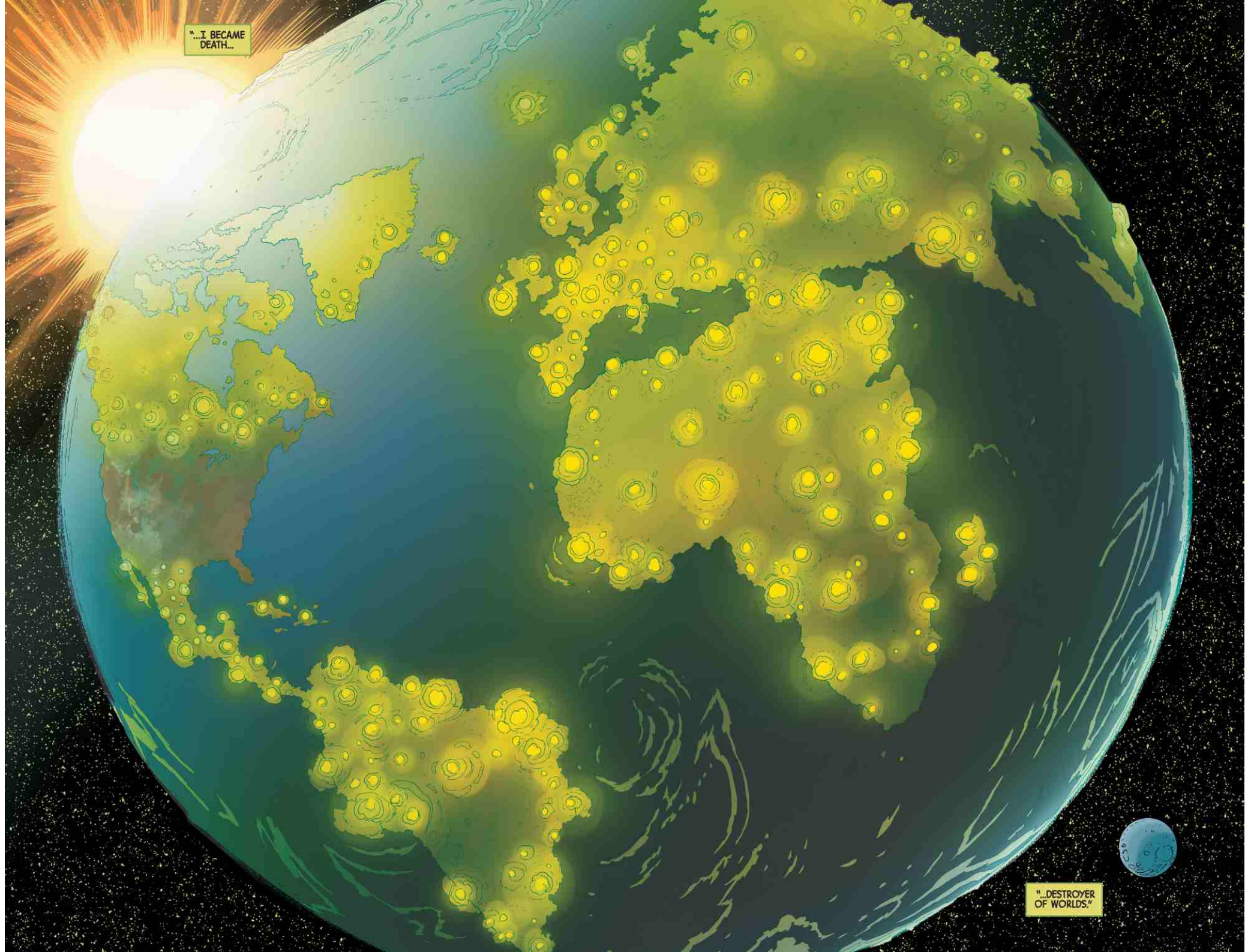
"EVERY HOME AND
CAR AND TELEVISION
AND LIGHT BULB...ALL
POWERED BY AN
UNLIMITED AMOUNT
OF FREE POWER..."

"BUT...
I WAS...
NAIVE."

"I DIDN'T
KNOW THE
DARK SIDE
OF POWER."

"I THOUGHT
MYSELF A PIONEER.
A SAVIOR PERHAPS..."

"INSTEAD...
IN THAT
MOMENT..."



"...I BECAME
DEATH..."

"...DESTROYER
OF WORLDS..."

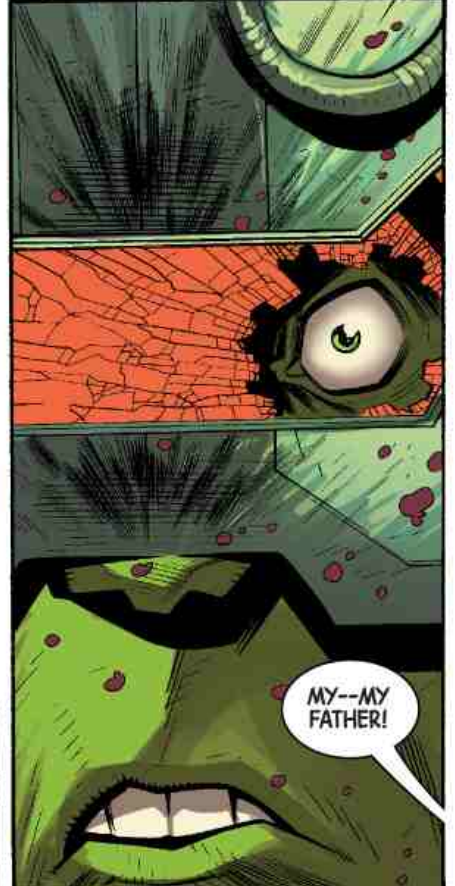
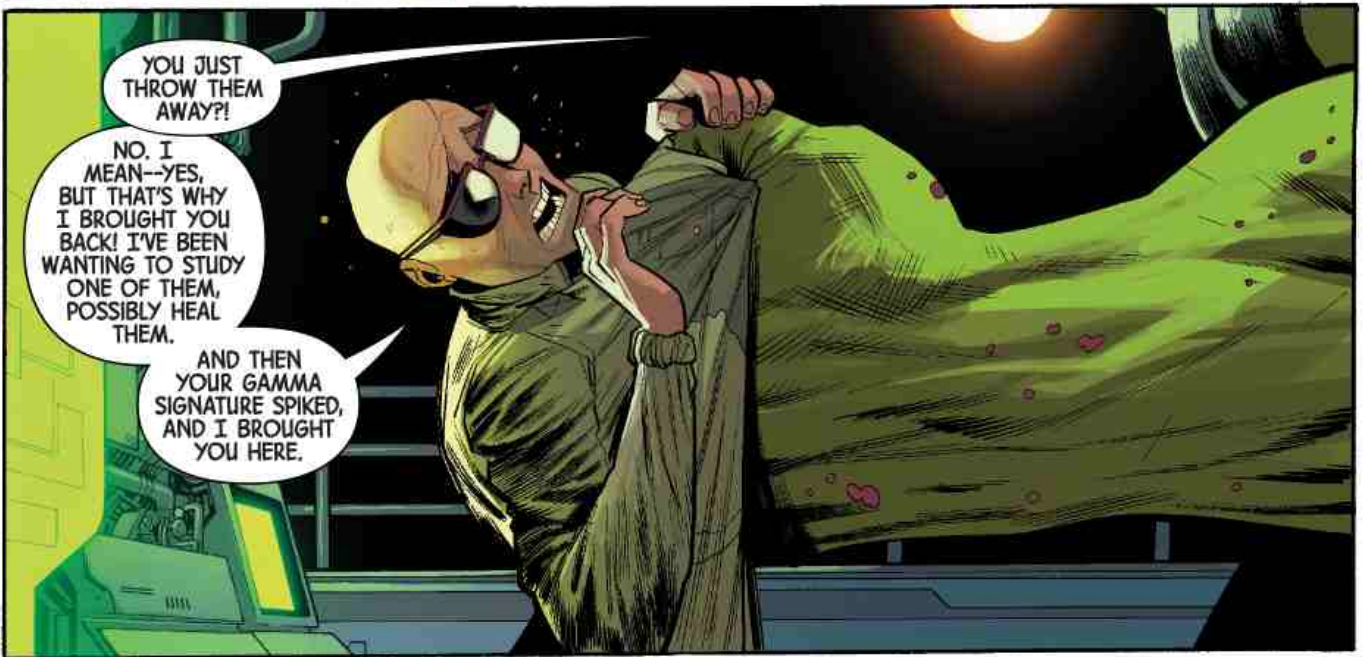






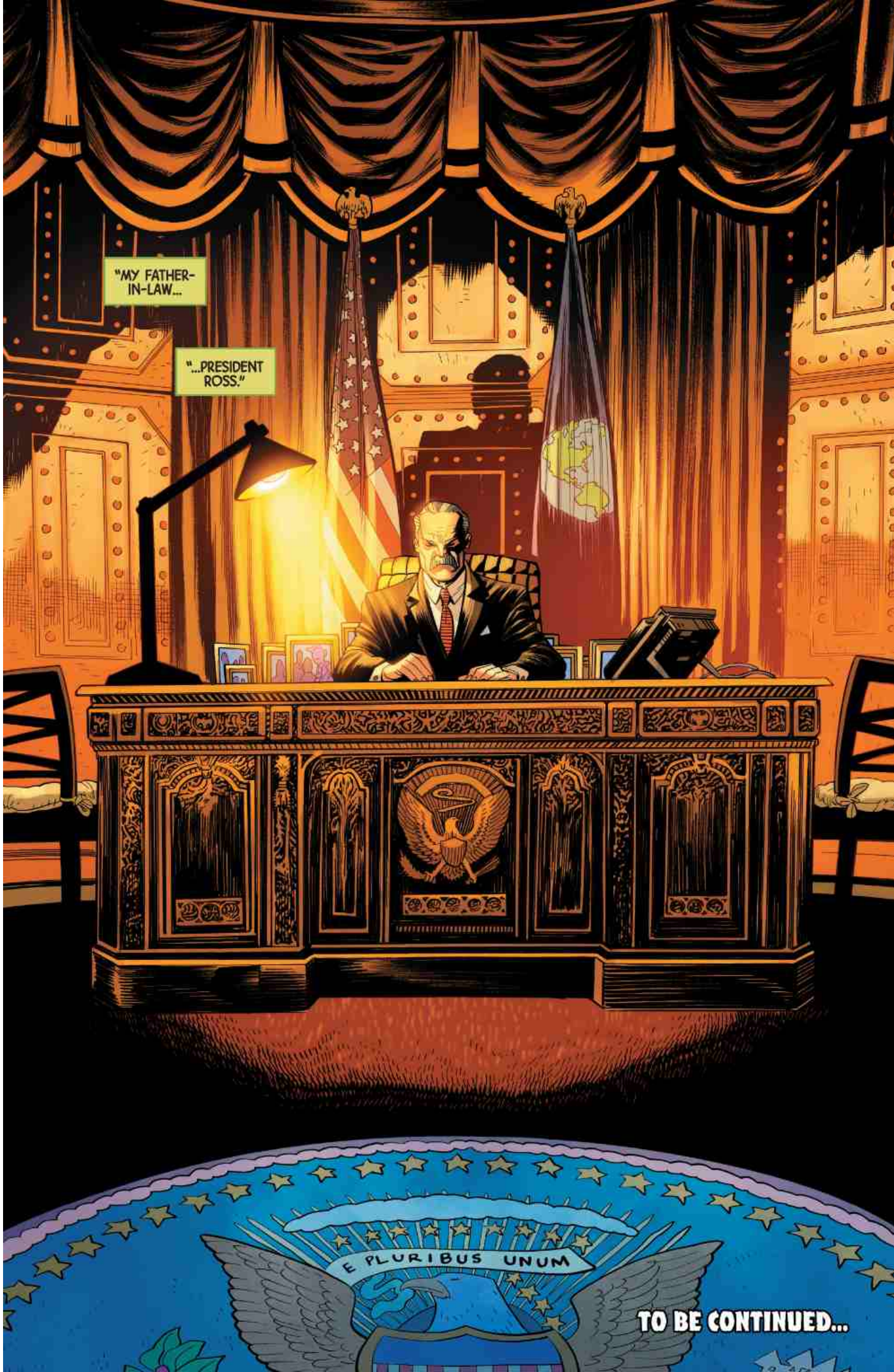
"THEY'RE
MONSTERS."





"MY FATHER-
IN-LAW..."

"...PRESIDENT
ROSS."



TO BE CONTINUED...

HULK

Hello, readers, and welcome to the first **HULK** letters page! Today, Donny Cates is here to answer some of your questions, but first, we need your help thinking of a title for this page! If you have any suggestions for titles, email us at MHEROES@MARVEL.COM. Remember to mark your letters **OKAY TO PRINT**. All right, Donny, take it away!

Wow! I just finished **HULK** #1 by Cates and Ottley, and it was utterly amazing. Like everyone who read the **IMMORTAL** run, I thought: How could that be topped? Cates delivered a fine story, a unique take on the mythos of the Incredible Hulk saga. From the aspect of Banner's brain speaking to Betty, to his beating of the army. Wow, that had my heart beating fast. The art alone for this little scene was explosive from frame to frame. Ottley's facial expressions were so expressive, you could read the characters' expressions easily. Furthermore, how the Avengers are incorporated into the storyline shows promise for fights down the line. But the beatdown delivered to Stark was brutal. The whole fight scene--so inventive, so electrifying, clearly a Marvel lol... My hat's off to you fine folks--the double-page spread, with "infinite armies" in the corner, was a sight to behold. And lest I forget, the celestial armor that Hulk walks into, you fine sirs have created a fine introduction into the fine Hulk yarn you guys have got coming my way. I loved the first issue and can't wait to see what's in store this time around. Thanks for the fun.

Joe L. Ortis

Hey, Joe! Thank you so much! That kind of insanity is exactly what Ryan and I wanted to express in this first issue, so we're so happy you dig it! And don't you worry, that's just the tip of the iceberg! I'm not exaggerating when I say you haven't seen **ANYTHING** yet!

Adam Avila here. I love what Donny Cates and his team are doing with the Hulk. I can't wait to see what they have in store for the character. I've read a good portion of Ryan's work on *Invincible* and a few issues of Donny's *VENOM* run. I'm really on the edge of my seat here! I love all the liberties Donny is taking, and I look forward to seeing his stories come to life on the page thanks to Ryan and Frank's work together.

Yeah! I have to say, that's the absolute best part of my job. I get to write these **INSANE** scenes and then one of my favorite artists in the world brings them to life!!! How lucky am I?!

Hey, guys, I've love Donny Cates since I read his run of *VENOM*, so stoked to see what happens next!

Oyebisola Olanipekun

Hey! Me too!!! Haha, the greatest part about writing the Hulk (**THE STRONGEST ONE THERE IS!!!**) is that the sky is the limit! And then, as we've already seen, Hulk will **SMASH THE SKY** and keep going!

Before I start, I need to let you know I am 56 years old and I have been reading comics since 1969. Marvel has always been my favorite company, and I have been reading the Hulk regularly since **INCREDIBLE HULK** #151 (May 1972). So the Hulk and I go back a long way.

I don't buy many "new" comics off the stands anymore. The industry has for the most part moved away from the older collectors like me (and it's okay, I understand this has to happen every generation or so for the industry to survive). The industry and most modern titles really have left longtime readers marooned when it comes to new comics. Dark and grim stories, endless reboots and retcons only make it worse, but as I stated before, these events must happen for a hobby that I LOVE to survive.

That's why **HULK** #1 was such a surprise to me.

I know Donny Cates' work and I like Ryan Ottley's art, but in my mind, following up **IMMORTAL HULK** is almost a suicide mission, even for creators THIS talented. **IMMORTAL HULK** was one of those rare series where every issue was one masterpiece after another. Al Ewing and Joe Bennett really tapped into what made me fall in love with the character.

I mourned the last issue of **IMMORTAL HULK**. I really liked the title a lot. It was one of the few Marvel titles I bought without pause from start to finish.

When I read that Hulk was coming back with a new #1 issue (sigh, another reboot), I was disheartened but intrigued when I saw the creative team involved. So instead of just cutting bait as I have done more often than not as of late, I

decided to check out the new title with an open mind. After reading it, I am more than happy to share that I am glad I did.

"**SMASHTRONAUT**" was just the shot I needed to keep me engaged with the character.

In my humble opinion, Cates spun the perfect amount of angst with Bruce showing that truly ruthless nature that's really always been just under the surface of the character. Always on the edge of insanity and detached from society, the fact that Bruce has embraced this is frightening...like what if Luke Skywalker embraced the dark side? Tapping into the Hulk's rage to power his own ambitions is both frightening and exciting.

BTW, I caught the Hulk saying "Banner" when he was shot by the "army" in the engine, as if the Hulk is cognizant of the face that Bruce is up to no good with him...and that is also terrifying.

Ryan Ottley's art has never looked better. His layouts are strong and his already stellar storytelling has only improved with age. Capturing the rage of the Hulk is no easy feat and he captured the Hulk's rage in the engine perfectly.

In closing, I'd like to congratulate you and thank you for a job well done relaunching one of my favorite characters and keeping it fresh for the youngins but keeping enough there so a longtime fan like me can stick around for the ride.

I consider #1 to be an invitation to stay and enjoy... I plan to stick around....

Mark Livengood

Well, Mark, I'd like to say thank you back. This industry can sometimes be overwhelmingly critical and negative, and my mission has always been to entertain people and make fans happy. So hearing this from you really does make my heart smile. We never want to alienate fans or make anyone feel like they aren't welcome. If anything, Ryan and I set out to make this as safe of a jumping-on point as we humanly could. It really is a joy to hear that you felt at home in this new, insane and rage-filled landscape. Thanks for taking a chance on us. And welcome aboard **STARSHIP HULK**!

Thanks for an amazing first issue! After Ewing's instant-classic fifty-issue run, I figured whoever took the Hulk-helm next would have a hell of a time filling those shoes. But having just enjoyed the heck out of Cates' equally legendary run of VENOM, I knew this "Smashtronaut" run would be something special and... WOW! Amazing!

I'm a big fan of Douglas Preston & Lincoln Child's Pendergast series, so when I saw Dr. Strange mention a "mind palace," I jumped with glee. I don't know if you guys are familiar with that series, but it's one of my favorites. The thought that Banner has found a way to fracture his own mind so thoroughly that he can "USE" the Hulk (not just trap him) is pretty incredible. It's an amazing marriage of different sci-fi tropes you've got stewing here, and I can't wait to see where it all goes. It's a really cool idea: Banner finally controlling the Hulk by separating himself from the Body and the Rage. I look forward to seeing how it goes terribly wrong. :D

Plus, Ottley's amazing art! The colors! Especially the heavy red, green and black. Everything just pops in such a raw, vivid way. Then, the inert gray tones for the technology stands in such amazing contrast with the reds and greens. REALLY impressive. I reread the issue after I read it to look through all the art again. I'm really looking forward to this dual masterpiece of Cates' writing & Ottley's art. Thanks, guys!

And I'm sure Stark having control of a dead Celestial won't go wrong at all. ;)

My one curiosity is if that was REALLY Betty, or if it was just a manifestation of Banner's now-fractured mind: a conscience of some sort. I can't help but think of Beatrice in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, and the question of if it's really somehow Beatrice, or more likely just another manifestation of Dante's vision-quest. If it is Betty (or even if she is just another part of Banner's fractured-psyche), I'll be curious to see how/if her Harpy personality/powers come into play.

VERY cool first issue! Thank you, team!

Andrew Salmon
Alexandria, Virginia

Hey thanks, Andrew, and yeah, stay tuned for more on the whole "Is that really Betty or...something else?" front! I'm willing to bet you're going to dig it. And I bet you're totally right! There's NO WAY that Iron Celestial armor comes back into play! If Tony Stark is known for anything it's his overwhelming restraint. ;)

Dear Hulksters,

I continue my Marvel FCBD follow-up campaign, now arriving at possibly the most surprising first issue of a new run this year. Hats off to Cates, Ottley, Martin, Petit, Gambino, Gregorowicz, Moss, Cebulski and all the rest for once again completely altering our perception of how a Hulk book is supposed to work.

Three things in this issue made it shine to me. One: a gathering of Avengers, practically the entire team, always a real treat for any book not named "Avengers." Even better, Dr. Strange claiming whatever's coming next for our Green Goliath could be the greatest threat the Avengers have ever faced. Considering the current roster started off against an army of undead Celestials and will soon be tackling the Multiversal Masters of Evil, that's got to be the highest of backhanded compliments for Banner boosters everywhere, right? Could a "World War Hulk II" be in the offing?

Two: the image of Banner in the command chair of a "starship." That alone sold me on this book more than anything else I saw in previews. One of my favorite recurring images in pop culture remains the main bridge of *Star Trek: TNG's* Enterprise-D, particularly when there's just Picard or Riker or whomever alone in the captain's chair piloting the massive ship ever onward while everyone else is away. Evoking such an image for Banner is sheer catnip to me. I also enjoy the idea that the Hulk could be piloted like a starship; of all the analogies I've ever seen for how the Banner and Hulk personalities are related to one another (or in this case, not quite so), this feels the most surprising, yet somehow, still timeless and perfect.

Three: that final sequence with Hulk venturing through a weird portal to somewhere we've potentially never seen before, Fantastic Four style. When I was first discovering the classic Lee/Kirby FF run via "Essential" volumes in the early 2000s, what I was most excited about with each succeeding issue was the prospect of ever-expanding horizons and new frontiers being charted for the first time. The very act of exploration was more than enough to carry me forward with that team of "imagonauts," and it's what I'm looking forward to now with our freshly minted "Smashtronaut." (Also, mint. Green. Ha.)

Thanks once more to Donny Cates for bringing his signature brand of creative renovation and rejuvenation to yet another of Marvel's most storied characters. May the universe never be the same!

Smash you later,
Ben Kellogg

Thanks so much for your kind words, Ben! And thank you to everyone out there for continuing to trust me with these amazing characters and these bananas ideas! It really does make me so happy to (ahem) pilot these books and to have you guys enjoy them!

Hi guys,

Just read HULK #1 and I have to give you credit. After 60+ years of publishing history and stories by dozens of highly acclaimed writers, you manage to find a great new angle on Hulk/Banner.

What if Hulk exists to protect us from Banner? Just so creative. It's a great premise and I'm thrilled to be onboard with issue #1. Can't wait to see where this title goes. I do have a feeling that wherever that is, it is going to have a Hulk-sized impact on the entire Marvel Universe.

Michael Jeffrey
Natale Streetsville,
Ontario, Canada

Oh! You have NO IDEA!!! What if Hulk exists to protect us from Banner? Well, buckle up...because we're going to show you exactly what he's protecting us FROM!

-Donny Cates

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!
WRITE US AT
**MHEROES@
MARVEL.COM**
AND MARK YOUR LETTER
"OKAY TO PRINT"!

NEXT



ISSUE #4

